

# The War in Heaven

by [Paul Martin Freeman](#) (January 2024)



Pandemonium— John Martin, 1823-27

*for the IDF*

But stranger still and most sublime of all  
A second vision sweeps across the skies.  
The ancient war in Heaven before the Fall  
Is now arrayed for modern London eyes.

Primeval paladins with arms adorned  
Appear across the firmament in flight;  
Dark citadels of wickedness are stormed  
By hosts of glittering champions of light.

Then suddenly a mass of fiends emerge:  
They surge from hidden holes like teeming rodents!  
As packs of wolves on helpless prey converge,  
They target weak and vulnerable opponents.

Now crested warrior chariots appear  
With steeds of burnished gold and jewelled bridles:  
All thundering hooves and finely chiseled gear  
Ascending heavenwards in gleaming spirals.

Colossal forces lock in cosmic struggle  
As angels battle angels, good with bad.  
Gigantic stars are mined and turned to rubble  
By hordes of hidden trolls diseased and mad.

Demonic warlike engines thus created  
Hurl jagged thunderbolts of scorching fire,  
Whilst *seraphim* with courage unabated  
Press back against both heat and fiendish ire.

Like mighty clouds they buffet on the wing,  
And myriads with myriads contend;  
Across the skies the sounds of warfare ring:  
A scale beyond what Man can comprehend.

Titanic flashes as before are witnessed,  
But these are now of light-devouring black:  
Tartarean ordnance of the very grimmest  
And terrifying weapons of attack.

And subterranean tunnels, too, are seen:  
A network like the branches of a tree;  
A rabbit warren, hellish and unclean,  
Where naked demons wait with hateful glee.

For darkness is their natural element;  
Away from light they ply their filthy trade.

Their sacrament as foul as excrement,  
They practise it unseen in deepest shade.

Dishonour twists and writhes in every breast,  
And cruelty worse than Man has ever seen,  
While all to vice and viciousness attest  
And wickedness unnatural and obscene.

Yet Goodness always fights by *this* advantaged:  
Though Evil may outwit its guileless foe,  
As if by buried conscience still commanded,  
It loathes itself for causing only woe.

For though rejoicing in this pain and anguish  
Such barrenness is like the desert sands:  
Devoid of hope where every joy must languish  
And nothing for a moment ever stands.

And never did adversaries so differ.  
While Satan's legions lust to kill and maim,  
Their foes to God alone their souls deliver  
With *Purity of Arms* their sacred aim.

No thought of self disturbs these warriors' courage,  
But only comrades' safety their concern.  
And all each other in their fight encourage,  
Thus honour in each other's sight they earn.

And so they battle at the *Gate of Heaven*,  
The rebel angels trying to seize it all.  
They war for absolute and sole possession  
Nigh fourteen billion years before the Fall ...

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Paul Martin Freeman is a former art dealer in London. The poem is from *The Bus Poems*, currently in preparation. His book, *A Chocolate Box Menagerie*, is published by New English Review Press and is available [here](#).

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